

# COMMON MYTHS

about

## *sexual assault*

**Rape myths give people a false sense of security by minimizing, legitimizing, and/or denying the occurrence of sexual assault. They accomplish this by blaming the victim and making excuses for the perpetrator. In effect, these myths perpetuate sexualized violence because they fail to address the realities of sexual assault.**

**MYTH 1:** The best way for a woman to protect herself from sexual assault is to avoid being alone at night in dark, deserted places such as alleys or parking lots.

**REALITY 1:** Most assaults occur in a private home (60%) and the largest percentage of these occur in the victim's home (38%). In fact, over 80% of sexual assaults are committed by someone known to the victim.

**MYTH 2:** If a person consents to have sex at the start of making out with their partner, then changes their mind but their partner keeps going, it is not an assault.

**REALITY 2:** Legally, a person has the right to change their mind about having sex at any point of sexual contact. If a sexual partner does not stop at the time a person says "no," this is a sexual assault. If a person is in a relationship with someone or has had sex with a person before, this does not mean that they cannot be assaulted by that person. Consent must be given every time two people engage in sexual contact.

**MYTH 3:** Women secretly want to be raped.

**REALITY 3:** There is a big difference between fantasizing about aggressive sex and wanting to be raped. A woman is in control of her fantasies; however, women are not in control when they are being sexually assaulted. Rape is a violent, terrorizing, and often humiliating experience that no person wants or asks for.

### *There is help!*

WAVAW can support you. Our free services include: community referrals, transportation to and from Vancouver General Hospital for the Sexual Assault Support services, 24 hour Crisis Line, One to one counselling, support groups, aboriginal outreach and counselling, and a victim service team to help with legal forms, police reporting, and court support. For more information, contact our office: 604 255 6228 or visit our website at [www.wavaw.ca](http://www.wavaw.ca).



***women against violence against women***

Rape Crisis Centre  
2405 Pine St.  
PO Box 46851 Station D  
Vancouver, BC V6J 5M4

**24hr CRISIS LINE:**  
604 255 6344  
1 877 392 7583

## ***IT IS NEVER a survivor's fault.***

These are only a few of the many myths about sexual assault. If you, a partner, a friend, or a family member have been sexually assaulted it is important to know that it is never a survivor's fault.

Rape myths are often internalized, which can intensify a survivor's feelings of shame, self-blame and not being believed.

We all need to challenge these myths which help to perpetuate and normalize sexual violence.

**MYTH 4:** Rape is a sexual act that is 'taken too far.'

**REALITY 4:** Rape is an act of violence; it involves asserting control over another person and taking their power away from them.

**MYTH 5:** Women who are sexually assaulted "ask for it" by the way they dress or act; rape only happens to young, "sexy" women.

**REALITY 5:** Women are assaulted because we live in a culture that views women as less valuable than men. In addition to sexism, factors like racism, colonization, homophobia, transphobia, classism, fatphobia, and ableism all contribute to violence against women. It is these factors, not the way a woman looks or acts, that puts women at risk of violence.

**MYTH 6:** If a person is drunk or passed out from drinking too much, it is okay to have sex with them.

**REALITY 6:** If a person is unconscious or their judgement is impaired by alcohol or drugs, they are unable to give consent. Legally, consent has to be a freely and clearly given "yes," not just the absence of a "no." Having sex with a person when they are intoxicated is a sexual assault.

**MYTH 7:** Women cannot rape other women.

**REALITY 7:** The majority of sexual assaults are committed by men against women or girls and many are committed by men against men or boys. However, sexual assault and abuse can happen in all relationships, whether the members are of the same or different genders. Often, when women are assaulted by other women, or men are assaulted by other men, they fear they will not be believed. It is important to realize that ALL survivors of sexual violence experience trauma.

**MYTH 8:** Men of certain races and backgrounds are more likely to sexually assault women.

**REALITY 8:** Men who commit sexual assault come from every economic, ethnic, racial, age, and social group. As well, women who are sexually assault are from every economic, ethnic, racial, age, and social group.



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